Hanna Learning Centre
Community Conversation, October 2, 2013

What you told us about top priorities
1. Be engaged with local business and industry to identify the adult learning needs of employees
2. Coordinate with other community stakeholders to address gaps in meeting the needs of adult learners
3. Provide employment preparation courses
4. Fourth, CALC facilitates the integration of Workplace Essential Skills programs into community workplaces
5. Build a strong relationship with the Comprehensive Community Institutions to assist adult learners in their transition to formal educational opportunities
6. Facilitate future community dialogue to engage community stakeholders in identifying and addressing concerns impacting adult learners
7. Facilitate the use of videoconferencing and webinars to provide businesses and business owners with small business learning sessions
8. Support Adult Literacy development through Family Literacy programming which helps parents and caregivers become engaged in their child's learning
9. Provide Adult Basic Literacy programs
10. Provide courses that address community issues

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire rating the importance of 18 aspects related to Community Adult Learning in Hanna. They were then asked to select their top priorities to identify core activities and future directions.

Background

Hanna and District Association for Lifelong Learning hosted an Open House and Community Conversation on Wednesday, October 2, 2013 to bring together collaborating organizations, partners and community members. Invitations were extended to individuals to represent the business sector, government, education, agencies, learners and tutors, parents, youth and seniors. Hanna Learning Centre staff and board members also participated. Each group/sector was assigned a different coloured sticker and asked to use the stickers for prioritizing their viewpoints later in the evening. A total of 40 individuals were in attendance.

Goals of the Open House and Community Conversation were to:
- Showcase of our Networks, Partnerships and Collaborating Organizations
- Increase awareness of Hanna Learning Centre programming
- Build stronger relationships and engage community members
- Identify and prioritize adult learning opportunities, needs and challenges

A facilitator from Alberta Culture was engaged to lead the discussion and activities of the evening. Various techniques were used to involve all participants.

Mind mapping was used in a group setting to capture the participants definitions of a vibrant learning community and what the window into our community looks like. It was felt that a vibrant learning community is engaged, resourceful, positive, and evolving. The window into our community showed an engaged, caring, friendly, safe community with declining population and aging infrastructure.

Questionnaires were used for two activities to establish what participants thoughts were in regards to challenges/needs for learners as well as core activities and future directions. To visually capture the overall results of the questionnaires, participants were asked to place their coloured stickers on their highest priorities in each activity. This produced a quick visual snapshot to see what the consensus of the group was. The actual questionnaire results were summarized after the event.

Groups were also asked to use post-it notes to summarize ideas on what was working well, how to get the message out and what could be done to improve marketing of learning opportunities. There are vital partners working together and Hanna Learning Centre's collaboration enables them and strengthens capacity to make things happen. They are open to new ideas and put forth a collective effort to make it work. HLC is a leader among CALCs in Alberta and mentors others in the CALC community across the province.

In order to get the message out, it was thought that the Course and Program Guide, website, newspaper ad, newsletter and social media were working well. Word of mouth was thought to be the best way to spread the word. New ideas to promote opportunities included a door to door campaign, promotion to businesses, promotion events like BBQs, flyers on windshields, surveys, billboards and event TVs around town. Higher profile could be attained with production of an HLC video and connecting with High School students to bring awareness of future opportunities and support. Word of mouth was again thought to be a good way to make personal connections to populations that haven't been reached.

Overall participants relayed that the event served to inform and increase awareness. It also provided a platform to engage community members and gather ideas for future directions. Participants felt that the event helped to spread the word and increased understanding of Hanna Learning Centre, opportunities available and challenges faced. Voices and ideas from various sectors were heard and shared. Participants appreciated the wide variety of perspective and were pleased that their opinions about HLC were valued.

Challenges for Lifelong Learning in Hanna/ What's Missing?
Participants were asked to rate what they thought were the top four challenges for lifelong learning in Hanna out of 14 possible programs/services/activities. The top four challenges were as follows:
1. Post-secondary courses for credit offered locally, via videoconference or online
2. Awareness of opportunities to transition to post-secondary programs
3. Employment skill development courses
4. Childcare, transportation or financial support to cover the cost of attending Adult Basic Literacy courses.

What did they learn?
Participants in the room had similar understanding, learned about all the different programs and some of the challenges faced. Hanna Learning Centre's work is valued in the community and this work is being recognized province wide. Some didn't know all that the Hanna Learning Centre offers but it was thought that HLC is working hard to connect with all ages. Many organizations and groups are involved with HLC and HLC has a lot to offer.

What did they feel were positive outcomes?
Positive outcomes included recognizing the good things that HLC is already doing and learning what is working well. Participants thought there was need to have more awareness and developed new strategies to promote HLC and our vibrant learning community. This was a good opportunity for community to evaluate and prioritize the challenges and future activities.

What did they feel was most valuable?
Participants placed value on meeting more members of the community and learning about the different opportunities. They valued the interaction with other people and appreciated the wide variety of perspective. They felt there was value in each person selecting top priorities for future directions and working together. Most valuable to several was the awareness that they were going away with and learning what is offered. They valued the engaging conversation and how to improve learning in the future.

Results of Each Activity

What does a vibrant learning community look like?
How does a community benefit?
What is the value that is added to community/business/industry?

A Vibrant Learning Community:
- Social Capital
- Engaged
- Growth
- Broader understanding
- Resourceful
- Evolving
- Knowledge is power
- Continuous
- Pool of employees
- Access
- Strength of the community
- Prosperity
- Health
- Opportunity
- Positive Energy
- Inclusion
- Leaders in all places

What does our window in our community look like?
- Positive attitudes
- Sparcity
- Caring
- Active
- Learning is improving
- Distant
- Can Do!
- Engaging
- Requires personal initiative to get out and find it
- Access to learning opportunities
- Safe
- Declining population
- Young, friendly
- Great place to raise children
- Aging infrastructure
- Not open to new ideas
- Library
- Declining family farms
- Tight knit and resistant to new comers
- Optimism open to new ideas

Activity #2: Challenges for Lifelong Learning in Hanna/ What's Missing?

Below are the top challenges facing learners in our community starting with biggest challenges or missing in our community rated as highest priorities to the lowest priority challenges.

1. Post-secondary courses for credit offered locally via videoconference or online
2. Awareness of opportunities to transition to post-secondary programs
3. Employment skill development courses (e.g. Standard first aid, H2S Alive, Resume Writing, Computer courses)
4. Childcare, transportation or financial support to cover the cost of attending Adult Basic Literacy courses
5. Courses that address issues in our community (e.g. boat or firearms safety, health related education, sessions for non profits and charities)
6. English language learning opportunities
7. Assessment tools for determining adult learner reading level or job readiness
8. Access to financial support to cover the cost of Hanna Learning Centre courses
9. General interest courses (e.g. cooking, Spanish, Photography, fitness)
10. GED preparation and high school upgrading courses for adult learners
11. Collaboration of community service providers to meet the needs of adult learners
12. Access to financial support to cover the cost of attending apprenticeship, college or post secondary
13. education
14. Family literacy programs and activities (e.g. Magic Carpet Ride)
15. Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Services (e.g. adult learners are matched with tutors to help with learning to read and write, basic math).

 Other priority areas that were also identified included:
- Increasing # of immigrants who do not speak English
- Barriers to providing service to Temporary Foreign Workers
- Reaching learners is difficult
- Hard to explain everything about HLC
- Not able to provide/support citizenship exam (federal)

What are the challenges to meeting needs?
- More post-secondary for our district
- Each area has importance
- Awareness
- Individual and situational is a challenge
- Cost of running a course and having minimum numbers to cover costs
- Synergy with timing of courses and expressions of interest
- How/Why do you get people to come
- Balancing act between learners engaging with opportunities because they are offered VS "individual centered"
- Timing of when courses are offered
- Cost/Fee versus free
- Perceptions
- Impacts commitment

Activity #3: Core Activities and Future Directions

The Community Adult Learning Council in your community provides adult learning opportunities and support in four required programming areas: (1) Adult Basic Education, (2) English as a Second Language, (3) Employability Enhancement, and (4) Community Issues. General Interest courses must be run on a cost recovery basis and are not funded with Advanced Education grant dollars.

The CALC also works with other community stakeholders, government and business/industry in addressing the needs of adult learners in your community.

Below are the core activities and future directions that were ranked from highest priority to lowest.

1. Be engaged with local business and industry to identify the adult learning needs of employees
2. Coordinate with other community stakeholders to address gaps in meeting the needs of adult learners
3. Provide employment preparation courses (e.g. standard first aid, resume writing, job re-entry)
4. Facilitate the integration of Workplace Essential Skills programs into community workplaces
5. Build a strong relationship with the Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCI or designated colleges in a region) to assist adult learners in their transition to formal educational opportunities.
6. Facilitate future community dialogue to engage community stakeholders in identifying and addressing concerns impacting adult learners
7. Facilitate the use of videoconferencing and webinars to provide businesses and business owners with "small business" learning sessions (eg. Business Start-Up, Basic Bookeeping, Growing Your Business, etc through the Business Link Information Service)
8. Support Adult Literacy development through Family Literacy programming which helps parents and caregivers become engaged in their child's learning
9. Provide Adult Basic Literacy programs (e.g. learning to read and write, basic math, upgrading):
10. Provide courses that address community issues (e.g. boat safety, dealing with grief, health related sessions)
11. Be a source of information about referrals to other adult learning opportunities in other communities or at colleges and post secondary institutions
12. Facilitate the use of videoconferencing to provide community members with education for local not for profit groups and charities (eg. Grant Writing for Charities, Risk Management for Non Profits)
13. Enhance the capacity of Volunteer Adult Tutors to work with learners to meet their literacy requirements
14. Conduct public forums/events around the specific needs of seniors (eg. Seniors' Symposium)
15. Provide General Interest courses such as Dog Obedience, Spanish, Photography, Cooking, Yoga, etc.). Fitness courses are currently provided locally by other service providers. General Interest courses must be run on a cost recovery basis and are not funded with Advanced Education grant dollars
16. Provide English as a Second Language (ESL) / French as a Second Language (FSL) courses for adults
17. Facilitate the use of videoconferencing to provide community members with education around health and family topics (through the Alberta Health Services Community Education Service)
18. The CALC conducts forums/events around the specific needs of the community (eg. Open House and Community Conversation)

What's Going Well?

- Close knit staff - good Staff team
- Vital partner for agencies in town
- Path finding "go to" for those who know and reach in
- Tenacious in a good way
- Hanna: Leading among CALC in AB
- Mentoring others in CALC community across the province
- Open to new ideas and collective effort to make it work
- Their collaboration with all that they do enables them & strengthens capacity to make things happen

What are new priorities that we should address?

In order to achieve a "Vibrant Learning Community" What ideas come to mind for HLC?

- Develop a post-secondary institute. Apprentice trades, try to use Youngstown Home.
- Personal Engagement
- Continued Community Support
- More VC Connection, using VC connection to post-secondary
- Connecting the "missing link" with business's
- Engaging Youth
- Dropping labels (inclusive programming)
- Awareness
- Return to Rural
- HLC offer more college courses to the community
- More post-secondary access in our community
- Engaging all facets of the learning spectrum
- Degree education courses
- More Federal/Provincial funds to make courses more accessible
- HLC going to the people in community
- Teach how to learn
- Increase awareness to people that could benefit from HLC programs & Services
- Marketing "value" to the community
- Facilitating skilled workers in workplaces
- Engineering post-secondary learning opportunity with ATCO
- Working with youth
- Innovative ways to engage single newcomers
- Increase Post-Secondary access to increase economy
- Increase community issue courses to promote self-pride
- More workplace essential skills to best improve self and workplace moral and safety
- Try to get ATCO on board to use Hanna as a training center for turbines
- Focusing Attention
- 4-H Alumni
- People who have grown up with "Learn by doing", most 4-H Alumni's in AB are @ University Colleges - Connect with the Regional 4-H Specialist for this area to discuss hosting/incubating 4-H Alumni Group
- More ESL Support
- Continued Organizational Support (Fed/Prov)
- Different education programs for youth
- Improve/Enhance Agriculture Skills and Marketing
- Look at different ways to attract the public to attend courses - ie: Charge a fee for course to place value on learning opportunity

How should we get the message out?

- Course and Program Guide
- Program Guide
- Newsletter
- Website
- Websites
- Newspaper ad
- Newspaper ad
- Word of Mouth – "Keep telling"
- Word of Mouth is best
- Word of Mouth
- Various ways of advertising

- Partnerships with other agencies
- Social Media
- Job Board
- Social Media is awesome
- Professional video

What else could we do to promote opportunities?
- Use "Did you know……."
- Go door to door
- Go door to door
- Board Chair to go door to door
- Use word of mouth
- Make people excited – do BBQ's, prizing events
- Use newspaper but change up the look of the ad
- Stand outside post office
- Flyers on windshields
- Catch phrases "Hey You"
- Personal connections and invitations to populations we haven't reached
- Field trip days
- Job shadowing – take kids and show them the possibilities
- Programs for new graduates fresh out of school
- Courses that transfer to University
- Gaps – kids from high school, lodge, hospital and 321 Playtime
- Get teachers on board
- Career Services connecting with High School students for awareness for future opportunities and support
- A place people come when they're lost – change the perception
- Survey others who haven't taken a course to find out what they want and get their contact info
- Get clients to encourage others to come with them
- Use billboards (include course content)
- Event TVs around town
- Talk to ATCO
- Ask "did you get referred?" – then the person who did the referral will get their name in a draw for a free course
- Missing age group (6 to 17 years) – not provided with funding
- More focus on Apprenticeship training
- Re-branding of literacy classes so that those who require the help would participate
- Go one on one from business to business more to see what is needed and work with them
- Can other approaches be used to advertise or get people to take courses
- Do not necessarily want to be associated with programs as they are named today
- Some of our target participants do not necessarily have computers, good literacy skills, etc so do not know what is available
- Is there a way that youth can be reached?
- Advertise at schools so they know what you are about
- HLC Video
- Target business with personal connection to discuss services and opportunities